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POEMS

WORKS BY WILLIAM HARTPOLE LECKY.

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London : LONGMANS, GREEN, & CO.

POEMS

BY

WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY

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LONDON
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
AND NEW YORK: 15 EAST 16th STREET
1891

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PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

TO MY WIFE

THESE POEMS

WRITTEN IN MANY YEARS AND IN MANY MOODS

ARE

DEDICATED

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AN AUTUMN ODE

NOW Autumn paints the fading trees,
  The mists obscure the plain,
The moanings of the fitful breeze,
  The heavy falling rain,
Bewail the pride of Summer gone
And icy Winter pressing on
  With unresisted tread.
At such a time we love to fly
On wings of thought through scenes gone by
  To summon up the dead.

And first I saw a happy boy,
  A mother's only child,
The foremost with ecstatic joy
  To climb the mountain wild,
To chase the fox, to course the hare,
To cast the mimic fly or share
  The passion of the game.
Fast sped the hours of work and play,
And every new succeeding day
  Seemed sparkling as it came.

Life opened out its scenes to him
One vision of delight,
No morbid care his eye to dim
No forecast to affright,
His heart was like the bursting flower
All filled with dew in morning's hour
And glittering in the sun—
(A gladness too intense to last)
The joys of childhood had not past
Nor manhood's toils begun.

He vanished soon, and in his place
I saw a young man stand,
The shade of thought upon his face,
A volume in his hand.
He follows with a kindling gaze
The glorious deeds in other days,
In distant countries wrought.
Eager he rifles learning's stores,
But yet more eagerly explores
The Infinite of thought.

Ambition swept her sounding lyre,
Her music thrilled his breast,
She touched his veins with heav'n-born fire,
He could not pause or rest.
She whispered, with a voice sublime,
'On, on, thy fearless steps may climb
The pinnacles on high,
To blazon there thy deeds, thy name,
To link thy life with living fame,
Be this thy destiny.'

Love touched her tender lute, her strain
  Fell softly on his ear,
He felt a new, absorbing pain,
  How poignant, yet how dear!
The restlessness of thought has gone,
Fame, wealth, and power no longer shone
  Before his dazzled eye.
Drawn from all grosser things afar
He hung on beauty like a star
  That hangs upon the sky.

A shadow on that love was cast,
  Life took a lower tone,
Ideals now are fading fast
  And selfishness has grown.
Ambition blighted or decayed,
High hopes by vulgar cares o'erlaid,
  Ignoble sin and strife,
And then the last, the saddest stage,
The slow corroding touch of age,
  The lethargy of life.

Ah spendthrift Life! how fast she drains
  The cup of joy to mortals given,
Till nothing but the dregs remains
  To cool her parching lips at even!
The power to breast the adverse stream,
The power to hope, to love, to dream,
  The strength of thought and will,
All that is best must die before
Our steps have touched the silent shore
  Where the last wave is still.

THE DREAMER

A YOUNG man wandered alone by the shore,
And he said as he gazed on the sea,—
'Be the life of the fetterless dreamer mine,
No home and no friend for me:
From sea to sea, and from land to land,
Be it mine for ever to roam,
Bright thoughts they are better than earthly friends,
And the mind creates its home.'

The ripples of evening quivered below,
And the sky was cloudless above;
And the breeze came as soft on the listening ear,
As the whisper of one we love;
And the sea-bird hung poised upon motionless wing,
Ere it glided in light along;
And the thoughts that passed through that young man's brain,
Were turned into waves of song.

But a cloud pass'd over the minstrel's soul
As he gazed on the watery gleam ;
The hopes and the cares and the joys of men,
Became like a fading dream.
His heart soon lost the power to love,
And his eye the power to weep ;
And the bloom of his fancy withered away,
And his mind was locked in sleep.

Winter may darken the glittering sea,
And summer return again ;
But no pulse can throb in that young man's heart,
No pulse of joy or of pain.
And the ripple breaks with a sadder sound,
Where he lies on the lonely shore,
With folded arms and a dreamless brain,
For ever and evermore.

SEASIDE

How pleasing to the beauty-loving eye
That long, low line where land and ocean meet:
The one as still and silent as the tomb,
The other with a gentle rise and fall,
And with a heavy, breathing sound—it seems
Like Sleep embracing her sad sister Death,
Or like a terrified and panting mother
Stroking the temples of her swooning child,
And sighing as she sees her toil in vain.
In such a scene fond memories weave their spell,
And hopes grow high, and Fancy seeks and finds
The far horizon of her noblest dreams,
Till like the sea our thoughts stretch on to heaven.

'FAREWELL, MAIDEN, THOUGH THINE EYE'

FAREWELL, maiden, though thine eye
With youth's brightest sunshine glows,
Though thy mantling blushes vie
With the splendour of the rose,
Beauty's flush must pass away,
Fleeting like a summer day.

Can the angel face alone
Make the happiness of life?
Are no hues of deeper tone
Needed for the perfect wife?
Stronger, softer, and more pure
Only moral tints endure.

Time will lend another hue
To what now attracts so much,
Come to me, and come to you
With a sadd'ning with'ring touch;
And a love song soon will wear
Something of archaic air.

Sadly, sadly must we part,
  Long for thee my thoughts will pine,
Why was such a shallow heart
  Linked with such a face as thine?
Yet were life a dream to me,
  How gladly would I dream with thee!

Life is three-score years and ten,
  Passion scarce as many days,
Broken hearts may rise again,
  Other lights may pierce the haze,
Not so bright but steadier far,
  Not the meteor but the star.

MEMORY

'TIS a memory twined with the years gone by,
A young and beautiful child,
With a heart that no pang of remorse had wrung,
And a brow that no care defiled.

And the past unfolds to my view whene'er
Her image before me flies—
The scenes of our childhood appear again,
And the friends that we loved arise.

Fond hopes that had withered expand once more
And visions of truths sublime,
As she floats in the light of her loveliness
O'er the dark'ning waves of time.

LINES

If desolation rend thy heart,
  Or sin pollute thy spotless name,
Forbid not that the tear should start,
  Nor check the rising blush of shame.

The thunder-cloud that o'er thee lowers
  In gentle rain will pass away,
The winter ends with April showers,
  The night by blushing turns to day.

BROKEN HEARTS

I SEE thy cheek grow deadly pale
(Let no one tell the mournful tale):
Was the fault in you or me
That led us both to misery,
Bitter words in anger spoken,
Loving hearts too lightly broken,
Foolish pride and hasty blame,
Deep but unacknowledged shame,
Love in one to hatred turned,
Remorse in both too fully earned?
Let no man judge between us two,
God only seeth through and through.

Soon, too soon, I plainly see,
The world will be no more to thee,
The many thoughts and ways of men
Will never stir thy mind again,
Thy dreams and hopes will soon be o'er
And love and hate and grief no more,
And those dear lips for me so chill
Must know a touch more loathsome still—
The hungry earthworms wait for thee,
Despair and agony for me.
Let no man judge between us two,
God only seeth through and through.

EARLY THOUGHTS

OH gather the thoughts of your early years,
  Gather them as they flow,
For all unmarked in those thoughts appears
  The path where you soon must go.

Full many a dream will wither away,
  And Springtide hues are brief,
But the lines are there of the autumn day,
  Like the skeleton in the leaf.

The husbandman knows not the worth of his seed
  Until the flower be sprung,
And only in age can we rightly read
  The thoughts that we thought when young.

THE SKATERS

Now the ice is smooth and strong,
  Hasten, hasten, ladies gay,
Join the undulating throng,
  'Tis the skater's holiday ;
Youth, with Pleasure in her train,
Lightly skims the glittering plain.

Lovely cheeks will soon be brighter
  With the ever-deepening rose,
Happy hearts will beat yet lighter
  As the blood more quickly flows.
Seize, oh, seize the flying hours,
Present joys alone are ours.

Eagle speed and swanlike grace,
  Swiftly glides each happy pair,
Half a dance and half a chase,
  And the joy of both is there.
Still the skaters gather fast,
Though the day be well-nigh past.

See them meeting, interlacing,
Spreading far along the ice,
Now in mazy circles tracing
Lines of intricate device;
Curving, wheeling, to and fro,
Weaving beauty as they go.

Now again they crowd together
As the eager race is run,
Yet by riband, scarf, or feather,
You can track them one by one.
Beauty, skill, or inborn grace,
Which will win the foremost place?

Friends and lovers gaily mingle
Yonder in the tangled throng;
Here, some little skater single
All demurely glides along,
Full as fair and skilled as they,
On her solitary way.

Slowly sinks the setting sun,
Red and misty in the west,
Only when the day is done
Comes the scene we love the best,
When a hundred torches blaze,
Dance and tremble through the haze.

Like the flakes of drifting snow,
In a dim and fitful light,
Like the forms that come and go
In the visions of the night;

Shadowy figures gleam and quiver
All along the frozen river.

Gaily rings the sounding steel
  Through the keen and frosty air;
Oh, the rapture skaters feel;
  Yet move lightly, and beware,
For the stream flows on beneath,
Sullen, cold, and dark as death.

BEFORE THE BATTLE

'Tis night—the warrior chiefs have met,
The tent is filled, the banquet set,
The wine cups gaily circle round,
The bard with wreath of laurel crown'd
Bends o'er the vocal strings.
  And as the martial notes resound
Each chief in chorus sings,
  And eyes grow bright, and spirits bound,
And every eager warrior flings
  His soul into the theme.
Now high the minstrel's notes are borne
In martial ire, in lofty scorn;
He tells of men of old who spurned
The wealth by base subjection earned,
Who drew the sword in Freedom's cause,
And fell amidst a world's applause,
The foremost in the battle's van,
Where clashing hosts meet man to man,
And war's red lightnings gleam.

Now changed and mournful is his strain—
  Sad as the music of the surge,
When sweeping o'er the answering main,
The storm's first fitful blasts complain,
  He chaunts the warrior's dirge.
He paints the scene when sad and slow,
With muffled drums and standards low,
Some youthful leader of the brave
Is borne to his early grave,
Wrapped in a banner for a shroud,
Attended by the martial crowd,
While Beauty's eye is dim with tears,
And Valour's cheek with sorrow pale,
For old in deeds though young in years,
No other chief like him appears
To dissipate his nation's fears,
  And make her tyrants quail.
Gone in the flush of youthful pride,
Gone from the mountain's tented side,
Gone from the field where oft his sword
The fortune of the day restored.
But no; his presence still is there,
Inspiring hope, dispelling fear;
His memory nerves the boldest heart,
His glory wings the fleetest dart,
The halo of eternal fame
Is brightening round his honoured name.

The minstrel sung, and clear and high
Shines many a spirit-flashing eye,
And many a chieftain glances proudly
  At his gleaming falchion's blade,

As the funereal music loudly
Tells of those who low are laid;
And many a warrior now may borrow
From the records of the past,
That courage needed on the morrow,
His day of glory—and his last.

'Tis night—the moon is riding high
Along the clear, untroubled sky,
And tinging with a pallid beam,
The yellow copse, the glitt'ring stream;
O'erflooded by the lustre shed
Around her path the stars have fled,
And not a cloud obscures the night,
And not a vapour dims the sight,
And not a sound invades the ear
But the tramp of the sentinel pacing near;
But the thrilling song of the lone night bird,
Like a spirit's voice through the silence heard,
But the fitful breeze that is murmuring
As light as the wave of an angel's wing;
And the firefly floats through the summer air,
And the bat is wheeling listlessly there,
And a moonbeam plays on the tents of the foe,
Till they gleam in its light like untrodden snow,
And a spell seems binding with cords of love
The earth below and the heaven above.
All seems in a mystical life to share,
The quivering stream and the throbbing air,
The glow-worm that fires the tufted sod,
And the moon that rides like a conquering god;

For the spirit of Beauty waves her wand,
And earth and sky to its touch respond.

I gazed enraptured on the scene
  Before my view in beauty spread,
As hushed, unruffled, and serene,
  As though each taint of ill had fled—
As though the clash of angry foes
Could never break its deep repose.
Who in an hour so calm, so still,
Oppressed by no o'erwhelming ill,
In health's full flush, could bear to leave
A world so fair as this, nor grieve?
Oh, never is a home so dear
As when the parting hour is near;
A maiden's voice has no such spell
As when its music breathes farewell;
The sun reserves the softest ray
To flush the parting steps of day;
And never seem the earth and sky
So lovely as to him whose eye
Looks upon death approaching nigh,
As on the battle's eve.

FOREBODINGS

THE sun was fading in the west,
A flush was on the ocean's breast,
And, feebly bright'ning, Dian's crest
  Ascended in the sky.

A maiden stood upon the shore,
She marked the storm grow more and more,
And to the angry billow's roar
  Responded with a sigh.

'Speak, speak, tumultuous wave,' she cried,
'Say where is he whose joy and pride
Was on thy foaming crest to ride,
  When tempests raged above?

'Slowly the weary hours move on,
Thrice garish day has come and gone,
Thrice have the stars grown pale and wan,
  In waiting for my love.'

The storm unfurled its cloudy wing,
The surge grew black and threatening,
The lightning like a living thing
  Throbbed wildly on the wave.

And in the darkness of my dream,
I saw the ghastly corpselight gleam,
I heard a loud despairing scream,
  And none was near to save.

NEMESIS

THE voice of the afflicted is rising to the sun,
The thousands who have perished for the selfishness of one,
The judgment seat polluted, the altar overthrown,
The sighing of the exile, the tortured captive's groan,
The many crushed and plundered to gratify the few,
The hounds of hate pursuing the noble and the true;
But vengeance follows surely, and her strokes are fierce and wild,
For the storm-cloud was in labour, and the lightning was its child.

When the tyrants are all buried and the evil laws repealed,
When upright men are ruling and every wrong seems healed,
Then the ancient feud reopens and the tardy bolt is cast,
And the land is filled with bloodshed for the evils of the past,

And men will talk of justice as the storm of carnage raves,
And the innocent are murdered for the guilty in their graves!
Oh God! what sights are witnessed upon this earthly ball,
And the things that men call justice are often worst of all.

The servitude of ages leaves its impress on a race,
Because the fathers suffered, the children's hearts are base,
You cannot win by kindness, in vain you break the chain;
The hatred and the impotence and the slavish type remain.
The dead are still our masters, and a power from the tomb
Can shape the characters of men, their conduct and their doom.

EVENING

'Tis evening—the sun is cleaving
  The dim horizon line,
And the western clouds upheaving
  Like a sea of glory shine.

And a beam of departing splendour
  Illumines the sea below
With a flush as soft and as tender
  As a sleeping infant's glow.

And the evening star is quivering
  On the verge of that sea above,
Like Hope standing pale and shivering
  As she looks upon dying Love.

A MISSED DESTINY

WEARY of life, but yet afraid to die,
Sated and soured too, he slowly sinks,
With genius, knowledge, eloquence and wit,
And all the gifts of fortune vainly given ;
Some morbid ply that flaws the heart or brain,
Some strange infirmity of thought or will,
Has marred them all ; nothing remains behind
But fragmentary thoughts and broken schemes,
Some brilliant sayings and a social fame
Already fading ; but his mind is yet
Keen, clear, and vivid, though his nerveless will
Can never rise to action ; so he ends—
The eagle's eye without the eagle's wing.

ON AN OLD SONG

LITTLE snatch of ancient song,
What has made thee live so long?
Flying on thy wings of rhyme
Lightly down the depths of time,
Telling nothing strange or rare,
Scarce a thought or image there,
Nothing but the old, old tale
Of a hapless lover's wail;
Offspring of an idle hour,
Whence has come thy lasting power?
By what turn of rhythm or phrase,
By what subtle careless grace,
Can thy music charm our ears
After full three hundred years?

Little song, since thou wert born,
In the Reformation morn,
How much great has passed away,
Shattered or by slow decay,
Stately piles in ruins crumbled,
Lordly houses lost and humbled,
Thrones and realms in darkness hurled,
Noble flags for ever furled,

Wisest schemes by statesmen spun,
Time has seen them one by one
Like the leaves of Autumn fall—
A little song outlives them all.

There were mighty scholars then,
With the slow, laborious pen,
Piling up their works of learning,
Men of solid, deep discerning,
Widely famous as they taught
Systems of connected thought,
Destined for all future ages;
Now the cobweb binds their pages;
All unread their volumes lie
Mouldering so peaceably,
Coffined thoughts of coffined men,
Never more to stir again
In the passion and the strife,
In the fleeting forms of life,
All their force and meaning gone,
As the stream of thought flows on.

Art thou weary, little song,
Flying through the world so long?
Canst thou, on thy fairy pinions,
Cleave the future's dark dominions,
And with music soft and clear
Charm the yet unfashioned ear,
Mingling with the things unborn,
When perchance another morn,
Great as that which gave thee birth,
Dawns upon the changing earth?

It may be so, for all around,
With a heavy, crashing sound,
Like the ice of polar seas
Melting in the summer breeze,
Signs of change are gathering fast,
Nations breaking with their past.

The pulse of thought is beating quicker,
The lamp of faith begins to flicker,
The ancient reverence decays
With forms and types of other days,
And old beliefs grow faint and few
As knowledge moulds the world anew,
And scatters far and wide the seeds
Of other hopes and other creeds;
And all in vain we seek to trace
The fortunes of the coming race,
Some with fear and some with hope—
None can cast its horoscope.
Vap'rous lamp or rising star,
Many a light is seen afar,
And dim shapeless figures loom
All around us in the gloom—
Forces that may rise and reign
As the old ideals wane.

Landmarks of the human mind
One by one are left behind,
And a subtle change is wrought
In the mould and cast of thought;
Modes of reasoning pass away,
Types of beauty lose their sway,

Creeds and causes that have made
Many noble lives must fade,
And the words that thrilled of old
Now seem hueless, dead, and cold;
Fancy's rainbow tints are flying,
Thoughts like men are slowly dying;
All things perish, and the strongest
Often do not last the longest;
The stately ship is seen no more,
The fragile skiff attains the shore;
And while the great and wise decay,
And all their trophies pass away,
Some sudden thought, some careless rhyme,
Still floats above the wrecks of Time.

VANITAS VANITATUM

WITH baubles and phantoms and nicknames we
end as we began,
But the doll gives more joy to the child than the
Garter can give to the man,
And the dreams of our youth are better than all
the wisdom of age,
And the heart of the schoolgirl beats happier than
the heart of the king or the sage,
And the silliest charm gives more comfort to thou-
sands in sorrow and pain
Than they ever will get from the knowledge that
proves it so foolish and vain.
If the measure of worth be but happiness, if this be
the keynote of life,
Illusion is better than knowledge, as slumber is
better than strife ;
For we know not where we come from, and we
know not whither we go ;
And the best of all our knowledge is how little we
can know.

VOICES OF THE EVENING

THE sailors were chaunting their measured songs
To the throb of the glittering oar,
And each ripple seemed laden with melody,
As it broke on the silent shore.

And the sun went down in the burning sky,
And the western wave grew bright,
As the day, like a dream of loveliness,
Melted in misty light.

And a spirit within me seemed to say
Farewell to the paths of toil,
Farewell to the strife of the labouring pen,
The strife of the barren soil.

I ask not the will that can hew its way
Where the battles of life are fought,
Or the mind that can melt down the world of dreams
In the fire of searching thought.

No lovelier light adorns the sky
Than the trembling light of the star,
And the mind that shines with a wavering beam
Is the best and the loveliest far.

I ask, not to climb to Wealth's glittering heights,
Or to stand where Fame's sunflush glows,
But the twilight calm and the valley's shade,
And the violet more than the rose.

But the sun sank down, and a keen, fresh breeze
Renerved my spirit again,
And a voice came floating over the waves,
And it told of strife with men.

For life is a struggle and not a dream,
And ambition's power must last,
Till the first fresh strength of the mind be gone,
Till the fire of youth be past.

SONG

ONCE more, once more returning Spring
Makes field and forest gay,
And overhead on spangled wing
The newborn insects play;
A gleam is on the bending grass,
A glitter on the sea,
And o'er its waves in thought I pass
To thee, dear maid, to thee.

Oh, wearily I count the hours
That slowly ebb away,
And weary through the springtide flowers
My languid footsteps stray.
The light that streams on hill and glade
Brings little joy to me,
My heart but casts a darker shade
When I am not with thee.

The lover's seasons come and go
With no celestial sphere,
The lover's sun is here below,
His light to guide and cheer;

All nature seems to droop and wane
When thou art far from me,
And all the world grows bright again
With thee, dear maid, with thee.

THE SOWER AND HIS SEED

HE planted an oak in his father's park
And a thought in the minds of men,
And he bade farewell to his native shore,
Which he never will see again.
Oh, merrily streams the tourist throng
To the glow of the Southern sky;
A vision of pleasure beckons them on,
But he went there to die.

The oak will grow and its boughs will spread,
And many rejoice in its shade,
But none will visit the distant grave
Where a stranger youth is laid;
And the thought will live when the oak has died
And quicken the minds of men,
But the name of the thinker has vanished away,
And will never be heard again.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

How calm the life of mortals flows
In its secluded course,
Where nature's influence gives repose
And habit keeps its force.

Where ancient memories linger long,
And friends are few and fast;
And hearts are simple, pure and strong,
– Deep-rooted in the past.

Here in this fev'rish city strife
Each day new int'rests brings,
And countless feelings quicken life,
But all of them have wings.

And endless forms of joy and pain,
Of knowledge, thought, and speech,
Incessant break on heart and brain,
Like waves upon the beach.

Too many figures crowd the scene,
And, as they hurry by,
How few will pause on what has been,
Or miss the forms that fly!

So fast each imprint fades away,
So transient love and sorrow,
The grave that closed but yesterday
Is half-forgot to-morrow.

But ah, the wounds that cannot heal!
The hearts that fester there!
The keenest pang that mortals feel
Is grief that none will share.

'I DREAMED A DREAM OF GLORY'

I DREAMED a dream of glory,
  I dreamed I saw thee rise,
In all thy passing loveliness,
  Before my dazzled eyes;
Thy cheek was flushed with pleasure,
  And beaming was thine eye,
As when we roamed together,
  As in the days gone by.

A voice that long was silent
  Seemed wafted to my ear,
It told of many a struggle,
  Of many a triumph near;
But, better far, it told me
  That days of peace were nigh,
When we may roam together
  As in the days gone by.

It told me—oh, how softly!
  And was it but a dream?—
That earth's most bitter partings
  Are not the things they seem,

That severed hearts are blended
In some dim world on high,
Where spirits roam together
As in the days gone by.

Though soon that vision vanished,
Its traces still remain,
Its glory streams across my life
Through sorrow and through pain;
The shadows gather round me,
Yet still my thoughts can fly,
Where we may roam together
As in the days gone by.

A WOMAN'S PORTRAIT

SHE was fair, but not so fair
That others were not lovelier there ;
Hers was not the fleeting power
Of a brief impassioned hour,
But the charm that grows more dear
With each slow revolving year.
In her eye of cloudless blue,
In her smile so sweet and true,
You might read a spirit made
For the sunshine and the shade ;
Keen alike in work and pleasure,
Yet with self-control and measure ;
Brave and buoyant, wise and gay,
On the smooth or rugged way ;
'Tis the type that wears the best,
Made for sympathy and rest.

Pinings for unreal things,
Morbid doubts and questionings,
All the weakness and the pain
Of the fever-stricken brain,

Turning from the things we see
To the things that cannot be,
Vanished in the healthy hue
Which around my path she threw,
And the sting of settled care
Passed away when she was there ;
For my life grew strong and brave
With the courage that she gave,
And the night at last has flown :
Hers the praise and hers alone.

BIRTHDAYS

'TIME is the stuff of life'[1]—then spend not thy days
while they last
In dreams of an idle future, regrets for a vanished
past;
The tombstones lie thickly behind thee, but the
stream still hurries thee on,
New worlds of thought to be traversed, new fields
to be fought and won.
Let work be thy measure of life—then only the end
is well—
The birthdays we hail so blithely are strokes of the
passing bell.

[1] 'You value life—Take care of your time, for Time is the stuff of life.'—FRANKLIN.

THE DYING SEER

CLOSE the book—the task is over,
Toil and triumph both are done;
Weary, way-worn, restless rover,
Now thy devious course is run;
Worlds of fancy, thought, and learning,
All the tracts thy mind has spanned,
All grow dim, thy steps are turning
Onwards to the shadow land.

Many a hope thy genius kindled,
In the splendour of its morn,
Ere the evening came had dwindled,
Turned to doubt or grief or scorn.
Too much dross alloys the treasure,
Wayward flights and passion stains,
Only now we learn to measure
How much noble still remains.

Close the book—the words are written,
They will stand for good or ill;
True, the stately palm is smitten,
But its seeds are living still;

Darkness gathers round the writer,
Envious murmurs greet his name,
But his thoughts will shine the brighter
In the after-glow of fame.

LIFE'S TRAGEDY

THE flowers of spring-time blossom on the tomb,
But cannot reach the corpse that lies beneath,
And while the hopes of youth most gaily bloom
The heart still feels the irony of death;

The aimlessness of life, its broken lines,
Its boundless longings and its rapid flight,
The noble promise that a moment shines
Then sinks for ever in eternal night.

Oh strange unrest! that makes our pleasures cloy,
Till life and all that life can give seems vain;
The passing bell is heard amid our joy,
And sin and shame are mingled with our pain.

Remembered love, how fond, how deep its thrill,
When all is dark and envious Death devours!
The echo murmurs though the harp is still,
The fragrance lingers from our vanished flowers.

Whence have they come, and whither do they move,
  Those lives so strangely void or strangely crost:
The life of thought without the life of love,
  The life of love, when what we love is lost?

How fast they fly! the moments will not stay,
  Though past and future blend their influence there,
Deep roots of flowers that withered in a day,
  Dim shadows falling from we know not where.

Weak, blind, and helpless, from the depths we cry,
  Spirit of Nature, wilt thou hear our call?
Behold our wanderings with a pitying eye,
  And garner up our loved ones as they fall?

Thou who hast planted in the heart its needs,
  Its ceaseless cravings for some nobler sphere,
Mid changing forms and swiftly fading creeds
  We fain would trust that thou at least art near.

Our little tapers tremble in the gloom,
  Our boasted systems wither in a span,
And none can pierce the secret of the tomb
  Or read the riddle of the life of man.

Vain hopes and fears, ambition, strife, and sin!
  Thus idly glide our brightest years away,
Until at length the evening shade draws in,
  The early evening of our winter day.

Until the time when every power wanes,
  When all the hues that brightened life have fled.
The world grows dim, one only thought remains—
  How hard to die, how blessed to be dead!

MOODS

OH happy the hour when morning breaks
And the spirit of man refreshed awakes,
Eager and strong for its daily strife,
Too busy to think of the ills of life;
And happy the hour of the setting sun,
When the battle is over, the labour is done,
And the weary fly home, like the bird to the nest,
And the voice of the loved one is calling to rest!
'Tis the hour of peace when our troubles depart,
And the calm of the evening is felt in the heart.

But laden with care move the hours of the night,
When sleepless, yet weary, we measure their flight,
When the darkness around us has thrown its hue
On all we think and on all we do;
And the heart grows chill with a sudden fear,
And the things that we dread the most seem near,
And we think of the dead who lie sleeping below,
And of those whom we love who may soon be so;
Of age and of weakness, of sickness and pain,
And all our lives seem hollow and vain,

So fast they fly, and the long grass waves
Tangled and dank on our lonely graves ;
And the steps of the last of the mourners have gone,
And we are forgot, while the world rolls on.
For the hearts we love and the things we prize,
They pass like the swarms of the summer flies,
Or the clouds that float on an idle wind,
And leave not a trace in the world behind.

ASSOCIATION

'TWAS scarcely Love—not Love full blown,
For where *she* reigns, she reigns alone,
And rising up at Memory's call
Subdues, absorbs, eclipses all ;
Hers rather was the light that flings
Its radiance on surrounding things,
And in the retrospect of years
Entwined with other forms appears,
Brings back the half-forgotten scene
And makes the fading outlines keen ;
The sunlight gleam, the living touch
By which the landscape charms so much.

'SAIL ON, SAIL ON, THOU FRAGILE BARK'

SAIL on, sail on, thou fragile bark,
  Across the raging sea,
The waves run high, the night is dark,
  The Heavens seem closed to thee,
The guiding stars are seen no more
And cloud banks veil the distant shore.

Oh life of man, so fiercely tost
  By passion, doubt, and pain,
Thy chart is torn, thy compass lost,
  The lights of childhood wane.
How frail the bark, how vast the sea!
May God in mercy look on thee!

HOMEWARD BOUND

COLD, dark, and drear the winter eve draws in,
The nipping frost is in the air, the hills
Are white with recent snow, the leafless boughs
Arrayed in panoply of ice gleam forth ;
Amid th' ascending mists, in heaven appear
A few faint stars like snow-flakes of the sky;
And not a motion stirs the freezing air,
And not a murmur breaks upon the ear
Save that, with gentle sound, old ocean's lip
Kisses the rocky shore ; a ship lay there
Moored to the land, but soon about to sail
With some few passengers, and on the beach,
Waiting the signal bell, a man and wife
Stood gazing on the sea—she young and fair,
But he more old, though rather thought than age
Furrowed his brow ; and in his eyes there shone
A strange, sad lustre as of one who sought
To pierce the veil and gather more from life
Than life can give. Silent and close they stood,
As those whom love's sweet sympathy had joined
And kindred thoughts had moulded into one,
And watched the crescent moon that slowly rose,

Feeble and white above a snow-clad hill,
Half lost amid the mist ; and now at length
With half-abstracted air the traveller spoke :

'Tis o'er at last, that lengthened wandering
Through many nations and through many climes ;
When next the lid of night uncloses o'er
The burning orb of day, my native land
Once more will lie unfolded to the view,
Deep rock-bound bays, calm vales and mountain peaks,
And all those scenes with early mem'ries twined.
Full twenty years of crowded thought have passed
Since towards that shore I turned my farewell gaze,
An ardent student, bound to seek afar
A deeper wisdom and a nobler life,
With hopes which youth and youth alone can give.

How beautiful those days, like early love
When the bright worlds of knowledge and of thought
Break on the young man's eye. All nature seems
Suffused with light. Ambitions, hopes, and dreams,
Are then as palpable as living things ;
Buoyant as air the mind can rise above
The jarring elements of Earth. It seems
By gazing on the beautiful to burst
The trammels of its clay, to blend itself
With Nature's loveliness, become a pulse
Throbbing in Nature's heart, a thought absorbed
In the great soul of beauty that pervades

The Universe of God, a choral strain
Lost in the floating melodies of Heaven,
And mingling with the Infinite, a part
Of the pure essence of pervasive love
To beauty joined as passion to the soul.
Then hearts beat high, ambition knows no bounds,
Proud in its untried strength the spirit longs
To open springs of knowledge still concealed,
To see the full proportions of those truths
Which by their partial aspect charm the mind,
To body forth its dreams in earthly things,
Darting at times some lightning gleam of truth
To cleave the mists of error and to scathe
Falsehood enthroned on high, perchance to leave
Some plastic power behind it on the earth
Moulding for good the minds of men unborn,
Living through death an unembodied life
That time can never quench.
That flush must pass;
Soon, like the Alpine glow on snowy peaks,
It fades away. The impotence of thought,
The depth of darkness that surrounds our life,
The wreck of creeds and systems vainly deemed
On God's truth based, judgments that shift and wane
With passion, int'rest, circumstance, and health,
Hearts that draw all their strength and half their joy
From ancient prejudice and falsehood too,
Awe and perplex the mind. Not truths unmixed,
But coarser levers only move the world.
Truths broken, flawed or partial, party cries,

Passions and int'rests, custom, prejudice,
And many a man with error loses all
That gave him force and goodness. Thus the stars
Grow dark above us, and we learn to feel
How many sow upon a waste of sand
Or build upon the clouds; how soon we pass
And all our dreams are choked with churchyard dust.

All seek for joy—we see the little child
Seek it and find it in the simplest toy;
The schoolboy spurns the toy, but finds his game
Suffice to purchase ecstasy. The man
Contemns each childish mean. He points his hopes
To wealth or titles, power or renown;
Pain marks his upward course and baffling foes,
And often, if the wished-for end is gained,
He finds its influence frigid as yon moon—
Yon twilight moon that flickers on the snow.
And those who in the caverns of the soul
Have laboured most to draw from hidden springs
Some dream of happiness, some thought of love
To cheer the sad, are saddest oft themselves,
So small the part of knowledge in our lives,
So weak the power of reason on the heart,
So vain a maxim to appease a care!

Thus in the gloom and solitude of thought
I wandered long, till on my lonely path
Thy influence arose. In thee I found

A sacred spot in which the wearied soul
At length might rest—for thou hast been to me
Dear as to night the crystal stars that shine
Like pleasures nestling in her gloomy heart.
From thee, dear wife, I learned how Love can graft
A stronger plume on Life's dishevelled wing—
How, turning to the earth from which it sprang,
The spirit gathers strength, and yet may find
In daily rounds of duty and of love
The sands of life still sparkling as they flow.

We cannot fly our shadows or escape
The innate temp'rament that moulds our lives
To happiness or gloom. Its mighty stress,
Stronger than reason, conduct, circumstance,
Gives colour to our thoughts; the mind best strung
Can suffer most, and he who most aspires
To truth and knowledge and ideal good
Most keenly feels the impotence of life.
The shadows lengthen as the night draws on,
And youth's bright hues can never be recalled;
But Love and Duty linger, Habit smoothes
With kindly hand the steep descent of life.
And through the gath'ring mists Hope whispers still,
We yet may find, we know not how or where,
The highest and the happiest the same.
But hark! the ship bell summons us away,
The present calls us from the land of dreams.

'FLOW ON, SWIFT STREAM'

FLOW on, swift stream, amid the flowers,
  Flow on and dance with joy,
And tell me of the happy hours
  When I was yet a boy.
I watched thee with the loved ones then,
Now all alone I come again
  To wander by the river;
And I am old and they are gone,
But it unchanged is gliding on
  As young and bright as ever.

Unchanged it seems, yet who can stay
  The water's ceaseless motion?
The little waves of yesterday
  To-day have reached the ocean;
Unmarked, unmissed, they swiftly fly,
Unmarked, unmissed, we too must die
  And leave the mighty river
Where youth, and joy, and love, and strife,
And all the various modes of life,
  Flow on unchanged for ever.

A TALE OF MODERN ITALY

It is a cottage, hung with vines,
Amid the northern Apennines;
Deep hidden in a lonely vale,
And sheltered from the mountain gale;
And, winding near, a river flows
Descending from the distant snows;
And further on the eye may scan
The traces of the hand of man:
The vineyard sloping on the hill,
The font to catch the falling rill,
The image rudely sculptured there
To call the labourer to prayer;
And softly in the distance swells
The music of the cattle bells;
And wildly sweet the herdsman's horn
Awakes to usher in the morn;
And every sound and every sight
Seems filled with such a calm delight,
If time and change could only spare,
An all but perfect bliss were there.

Time in the bridal hours speeds fast:
A few short months of joy had past,

And now the clouds began to rise,
And darken o'er the lover's skies ;
The war-trump gave its loud alarms,
And called th' Italian youth to arms.
The word went forth from shore to shore
The suffering race may rise once more,
May cleave the old Germanic chain
And kindle in their land again
Some sparkle of the ancient flame
That led their ancestors to fame ;
And memories shadowy but sublime,
Dim phantoms of a nobler time,
Filled many a heart with martial pride
The day Antonio Moro died.

Peace to the brave ! not his the name
To mingle with the voice of fame ;
No minstrel's harp awakes to tell
How valiantly he fought and fell.
But flowers around his tomb are wreathed,
And many a sigh is o'er it breathed ;
And peasants' tears bedew the sod,
And prayers commend his soul to God.
Kings struggle for some sordid aim,
Dominion, power, selfish fame ;
With equal pride the soldier draws
His venal sword in any cause ;
A little touch of self may taint
The garments of the purest saint,
And martyrs as they nobly die
See crowns of glory in the sky,

Hear voices calling, 'Suffer this,
Thy guerdon is eternal bliss,
A moment and thy soul is clear,
Thou hast thy purgatory here.'
Not for such ends the patriot dies
(May heaven receive the sacrifice!);
No priest is there his cause to bless,
No promised crown, no pang the less;
His was the ancient Roman's mind,
He only asked to leave behind
A land united, strong, and free;
A nobler life he may not see.
Peace to the brave! the strife is o'er,
The tyrants' yoke can gall no more;
The clash of arms, the din of foes,
Can never break his deep repose;
His soul, we trust, looks down on earth—
The hour of death the hour of birth!
Ye mourners, dry the lingering tear:
The angels' cradle is the bier.

They laid him in a lonely grave
Upon the marge of Como's wave,
That breaks in gentle ripples near,
Like whispers for a mourner's ear.
It is a spot so passing fair,
The traveller loves to linger there:
In front the lake of deepest blue,
Around the mountains close the view,
And on their slopes, in terraced lines,
The eye may mark the trailing vines;

The maize with golden fruit and flower,
And here and there a leafy bower;
And over all things, pure and high,
The azure of th' Italian sky,
So soft, yet so intensely bright
It trembles through a veil of light.
But lovelier still that tranquil hour
When night first curtains hall and bower,
When evening's parting beam has paled,
And every mount, in darkness veiled,
And mantled in a solemn hue,
Looms dimly awful on the view.
The water's music seems more sweet,
And gentlest sounds upon it meet;
The throbbings of the distant oar
Approaching slowly to the shore,
The bugle thrilling clear and lone,
The bells of many a varied tone,
The peasant's songs that rudely tell
Of those who fought and those who fell.
Then shine the stars above, and soon
Upon the grave the still, pale moon
Pours down so magical a beam
That he who muses there might dream,
If such a boon to earth were given,
That rest in such a spot were heaven.

But she whose life was twined with his,
Whose only hope, whose only bliss,
Upon his smile and presence hung,
By that death-stroke her mind was wrung:

The pang, so sudden and intense,
O'erpowered every reeling sense ;
And as the moth pursues its flight
Around the taper's beck'ning light,
And love draws more than pain repels,
And death seems bliss where beauty dwells,
So round that one remembered joy,
With passion that no time could cloy,
Her thoughts distracted ever flew,
And drank in pangs and joys anew—
That poison cup which memory fills,
Which charms and maddens while it kills.

She deemed his spirit ever near—
His being seemed the atmosphere,
The life, the essence of her thought,
In all around her path inwrought ;
His voice seemed floating on each wind—
The image ruling in her mind
Diffused, reflected, and transferred,
In every much-loved scene appeared :
Yet though it seemed for ever nigh,
That presence could not satisfy.

The summer past—the leaves were shed—
She lay upon her dying bed,
And watched with a dilating eye
The sunset fringe the Western sky,
And mantle with its transient glow
The mountain peaks that soar below.
That lovely form was shrunk and frail
That cheek was now a deadly pale

Save one thin line of crimson light
That shone amid a ghastly white:
Not mingling there, but darting through,
It scarcely seemed an earthly hue;
And with a wild convulsive swell
Her snowy bosom rose and fell,
And o'er her brow the eye might trace
From time to time the shadows chase,
And flickering feebly on her lips
The smile that death cannot eclipse—
The still faint smile that lingers on
When all besides of life has gone.

She touched her harp—she swept its chords—
She linked its notes with living words:
Not as of old, when, free and lone,
Among the hills her mellowed tone
Poured forth a stream of happy song,
So clear and sweet, so full and strong,
That echo seemed to love the strain,
And murmured o'er its notes again;
And as the huntsman homeward strayed,
And heard, but saw not yet the maid,
He fondly dreamed of spirits there,
And to the Virgin breathed a prayer.
How changed, alas! for sorrow sears
More deeply than the brand of years,
And steals the freshness and the glow
From all we love the most below.
Ah! never more can echo wake
In hill or valley for her sake;

So faint her voice as death drew near,
The listener now must stoop to hear
The accents of that faltering tongue,
As thus in broken strains she sung:

'He has not gone—he has not gone—
I feel his presence near;
In every sight of loveliness,
Of grandeur and of fear,
Reflected and diffused I meet
The image of his mind:
So gentle, yet so passionate,
So lofty, yet so kind.

'A deeper beauty seems to rest
On nature's glowing face,
Since in each form of earth and sky
His lineaments I trace;
The fleeting cloud, the changeless star,
The wild majestic sea,
The flower, the lake, the cataract,
All bring my love to me.

'I asked for my love 'mid the glacier's sheen,
And the avalanche's roar;
Where the storm-wing broods o'er the dark ravine,
And the eagles proudly soar;
Where the cataract foams thro' the fissured rocks,
As it speeds on its wild career
'Mid the icy caves and the tempest's shocks:
I felt that my love was near.

'For grand was his mind in the strength of youth,
As the eagle on the wing;
And his words flowed as fierce in the cause of truth
As the avalanche of the Spring;
And his passions were strong as the torrent's rush
Through the rock that its might has riven;
And his soul, like the mountains, seemed to flush
With the first, best light from Heaven.

'I asked for my love, when the lake lay calm,
And the stars shone bright above;
When the earth was veiled, and the air was balm,
And the sky seemed breathing love;
When the night-bird's song, like a Spirit's voice,
Came thrilling on the ear:
Methought, as I listened, it said—"Rejoice!
For he whom thou lovest is near."

'Oh! gentle and calm as the lake at rest—
Gentle and kind as brave—
The tenderest graces shone in his breast
Like the stars in the slumbering wave;
Nor softer the note of the night-bird's strain,
As it floats through the air above,
Than his voice when it dwelt on some lingering pain,
Or whispered some tale of love.

'I heard a voice ringing—
It was sweet beyond compare:
It seemed an angel singing—
Singing in prayer.

I saw censers swinging,
And incense wreathing there,
And thousand spirits winging
Their pathway through the air.
And as I gazed on that still lake,
Where he I love, most seems to brood,
I heard a choral anthem break
As from the dwelling-place of God!
Louder and louder still the strain,
Pealed forth from that angelic choir;
It rang o'er mountain, lake, and plain,
Its music seemed to pierce my brain,
It thrilled through every burning vein
Like love's first wild desire.
Oh! as I chaunt it o'er again,
The veil that hides our bygone years
Is in a moment rent in twain,
And all the past appears.
Faint grows my voice, and dim mine eye,
Still in my ear those accents ring,
Once more those Heavenly notes I sing—
Once more before I die!

'Say not the dead have gone—
Past from this earth away:
Stars in the night that shone
Shine in the day;
What though their dwelling bright
Dazzle thy feeble sight,
Still with that golden light
Mingles their ray.

'Shades of the dead are near,
Hovering o'er thy bed;
Forms that were very dear
Shelter thy head.
Still as around they fly,
Thought seems to feel them nigh:
Dreams of the days gone by—
Dreams of the dead!

'Past pleasures rise anew;
Loved voices fill thy brain;
Dreams of the brightest hue,
Mingling with pain;
Angel forms hovering
Round thee on viewless wing,
Bid those old phantoms spring
Life-like again.

'Then say not the dead have gone—
Past from this earth away:
Stars in the night that shone
Shine in the day;
What though their dwelling bright
Dazzle thy feeble sight,
Still with that golden light
Mingles their ray.

'Hark! I hear the Spirit choir:
Methinks I see their bright array;
Angels strike the heavenly lyre—
Angels summon me away;

Gentle voices singing, singing,
Through the golden cloud-drifts ringing—
  Ringing far above.
Sister spirits, pure and fair,
Lo I come your joys to share;
Rising through the buoyant air
  On the wings of love.'

SPANISH SONG

SWEET dark-eyed Spanish maid,
I watched her as she played,
And she sang me many a ditty of love and sport and war—
'Toreros of Madrid,'
And 'Triumphs of the Cid,'
And many an ancient ballad as she played on her guitar.

Soft eyes and softer heart,
How quick the teardrops start!
Yet one note of merry music scatters all her cares afar;
So swift the clouds take flight,
And her thoughts are gay and light
As the bunch of coloured ribands that hangs from her guitar.

Then comes the Spanish dance,
And the youthful bands advance,
For the heat of day is over, beneath the evening star;
And words and hearts grow fond,
And eyes to eyes respond,
As we tread the merry measure to the sound of the guitar.

ILLICIT·LOVE

CHILDREN and wife, and honour and fame,
  True love and goodness and grace—
He sold them all for a life of shame,
  For a vulgar, venal face.
His name must pass, and its memory slip
  From the scenes where it shone so high.
It was all for a little curve of a lip
  And the glance of a cunning eye.
Oh! cruel the loss, and bitter the pain,
When the madness creeps from the heart to the
    brain;
And a life is lost, and its labour vain.

What was the charm that wrought the spell
  None but himself could see.
There's a door in each heart that leads to hell
  Could you only find the key.
A thousand trials conquered and past,
  The strongest climber may fall;
And the fated tempter who comes at last
  May be the meanest of all.
Virtue is strong and strong is the will;
But Time and Chance, they are stronger still,
And they hold the keys of good and of ill.

TWO FRIENDS

THEY were two friends, but very little like :
The one a hard, keen, literary mind,
As nimble as the serpent's quivering tongue,
Incisive, analytic, full of gibes,
Yet true and loyal in its narrow sphere,
Hating all mystery. To him the world
Seemed rounded off in perfect symmetry,
And all thoughts might be gauged. Five senses give
All that we know, and nothing lies beyond,
Though Fancy, Passion, Int'rest take those thoughts
And blend them into stately cloudy forms,
Baseless and fleeting soon. The stars to him
Were but an endless range of common earths ;
And that strange voice which in the mind of man
Commands and awes was but an echo formed
By custom, prejudice, or ancient use ;
And if at times, like music far and low,
In hours of pain or solitude or grief
Wild longings swept unbidden o'er his soul,
He deemed them but the signs of shattered nerves,
Or childish memories soon to be repressed

By rising reason. So he lived, and so
At length will die.
With him there lived a friend,
Dear to his heart, born in a Southern land,
Where thought is steeped in passion, with a mind
Deep, vague, and lustrous, as a Spanish eye,
Floating in light of dreams. His ear was quick
To catch the finer melodies of life.
The wonder and the mystery that bound
Man's little segment of the truth of things
Filled him with awe ; and as he looked within
He saw, or seemed to see, across the gloom
Dim broken lines that pointed to the sky,
And prints and characters of nobler source
Than sense can furnish—those deep-rooted hopes
Which grow and brighten with our better moods,
And pure ideals never here attained,
And craving needs which earth can never sate,
And love too fond for passing man to feel
If all were closed and ended in the tomb :
And chiefly that strange law that in a world
Of joys and pains a something higher rules—
Rules by acknowledged right, though often spurned.
The twilight visions of a noble soul
To him were sacred, and the Spirit-forms
That, faint and feeble, seem to flicker there
Were more than phantoms or than earth-born mists.
Above his head he saw the milky way,
Dim blending lights of countless distant worlds.

THE WIDOW

ALL has not past. The sweet bright smile lives on,
Like some calm star that mocks the tempest's rage ;
The eye still shines almost as when it shone
The light of features yet untouched by age.

I watched thee in the soft'ning twilight gloom
Which masks the lines where Care and Time have preyed,
And fancy soon recalled the vanished bloom
And in the widow still discerned the maid.

SEVILLE

SEVILLA ! City of the Sun,
I fly to thee, my task is done :
Weary heart and weary brain,
Thou canst make them young again.
Here, beneath this cloudless blue,
All things wear a festal hue ;
Life seems but a painted thing,
An insect with a gaudy wing,
A full-blown rosè, a lover's dream,
The light that sparkles on the stream.

Long chequered years have pass'd away,
Once more among those scenes I stray ;
And all below, around, above,
Still tells of careless joy or love :
Sunburnt dancers nightly met
With gipsy song and castanet,
Where the coloured lanthorns gleam
By the Guadalquiver's stream,
And the white mantilla's flow
Softer than the falling snow,
And the deftly quivering fan
Telling more than language can,

And the roses in the hair,
And the scent that loads the air,
Rising from the orange-grove
Where belated lovers rove
Through the balmy nights of spring;
When the birds most sweetly sing,
But not half so sad a tale
As our Northern nightingale.

Lovely city, let me be
For a time at one with thee;
From my heart all sadness chase:
Free me for a little space
From the tumult and the strife
And the seriousness of life;
Let thy Northern sisters boast
They can work and win the most:
Wealth and wisdom are their dower;
Thine is the enchanter's power—
Thine the gift to soothe and sway,
Charming all our cares away.

MARRIED LIFE

Two flowers blossom on one stem,
  Two streamlets mingling run;
And love and habit blending make
  Two lives as truly one:

One in each int'rest, hope, and fear,
  Whatever chance betide:
One in affection's bond, though two
  To comfort, strengthen, guide.

When Passion's torrid zone is past
  Hearts only draw more near;
And silent sympathies of love
  Strike deeper year by year.

When every little fault is seen,
  And every fleeting mood,
And all the nobler impulses
  Are shared or understood.

Yet still one secret, sep'rate dread
  Will sometimes cloud each mind—
Ah ! which must face this cruel world
  When left alone behind?

PASSION AND MEMORY

OLD legends tell how woman's hair
Can make the spirits of the air
Stoop down from brighter realms above
And feel the thrall of mortal love.[1]
So human passion draws its force
From many a strange, unlooked-for source;
And chords to all but one unknown
Will sometimes yield the sweetest tone.

The charm that prints the deepest trace
Lies often in a homely face;
And half our strongest passions find
Their keynote in an answering mind;
A hand can haunt, a voice can thrill,
A smile, a glance remembered still
Across the waste of vanished years,
Can fill the aged eye with tears,
While forms of purest Grecian mould
Leave Fancy dull, and Passion cold.

[1] 'Notatur etiam quod Incubi plus vexare videntur mulieres et puellas pulchros crines habentes.' 'Mulier debet habere velamen super caput suum propter angelos multi Catholici exponunt, quod sequitur propter Angelos, id est Incubos.'—*Malleus Maleficarum.*

And, stranger still, 'tis sometimes seen
How pleasure neither pure nor keen—
Some doubtful, broken, troubled joy,
All mixed with fear or pain's alloy—
Some fierce excitement's shuddering thrill,
Some passion strife of good or ill,
Will gain a charm in memory's dreams,
And grow and brighten till it gleams
A lonely star, whose light can last
Amid a long-forgotten past.

TO ——

'TWAS not alone thy beauty's power
That made thee dear to me:
The quiet of the sunset hour
Most truly mirrored thee.

'Twas thine to shed a soothing balm
On doubt and grief and strife,
And make a bright and holy calm
The atmosphere of life.

Thy touch of sympathy could find
To frozen hearts the key;
The darkened and the arid mind
Gave light and fruit for thee.

Ah! many a flower unnoticed springs
On life's most trodden ways,
And common lives and common things
Grew nobler in thy praise.

PAST AND PRESENT

THE days of our love, they come and they go
As soft as the flakes of the falling snow,
Or the morning flush that dances and leaps
From crag to crag on the mountain steeps,
As sweet and as calm in their rapid flight
As the sleep that follows a sleepless night:
But the snowflakes have melted, the sunflush has flown,
The sleeper has wakened, and I am alone.

Yet the past remains, though we know it not,
And its power is felt when it seems forgot,
As a youthful passion will leave its trace
In well-worn lines on an aged face.
We feel not the joy that we felt before,
But the pulse of our youth may throb once more:
A half-seen likeness we chance to meet,
A moment's glance in a crowded street,
The scent of a flower, a tone, or a song,
Can waken some chord that has slumbered long;
We know not why, for the image has fled,
But we feel the touch of the past and the dead,

As some mood of our childhood appears again,
With a vague unrest or a lingering pain—
Like a far-off cloud whose shadow will glide
On a summer day o'er the silvery tide,
Or the shapeless terror that seems to creep
Through the phantom-forms of a troubled sleep.

And the channels were cut long, long ago,
Where the streams of our thought for ever must flow,
The things that haunt and the things that sway,
The secret charms that our minds obey—
They come from afar, and their power will last,
For the Present must live in the shade of the Past.

A BROKEN LIFE

WE strove together side by side, but thine
The stronger pinion and the loftier aim;
Thy master-spirit gave its tone to mine,
A nobler measure both of praise and blame.

The golden splendours of a young man's dream
Lay round our path—and thine, how pure and fair.
Heaven seemed to open: little did we deem
That germs of sin and death were lurking there.

One hour of weakness—just one little hour—
One false step taken, darkened all the scene:
The tempter came, and thou hast felt his power—
A wreck remains where so much hope had been.

I watched thy visions one by one take flight—
High hopes and aims, that only left behind
A seared and jaded heart, the cynic blight
That kills the fruitage of the richest mind;

And men grow grave and silent at thy name;
Thy work is done, thy oldest friends depart,
And leave thee there to meet a world of shame
With hollow laughter and an aching heart.

How faint the lines that oft at first divide
The paths that lead to honour or to scorn!
How small a chance can turn a life aside
And cloud the promise of the fairest morn!

LOVE AND SORROW

LOVE in the country, sorrow in the town :
Let Love have roots, but Sorrow only wings ;
Where life moves slow each feeling deepens down :
A crowded life the quickest solace brings.

But Love from Sorrow never more will part,
She would not heal the wounds her sister made ;
She makes more keen each feeling of the heart ;
The brightest sunshine casts the darkest shade.

'I CANNOT BOW BEFORE THE SHRINE'

I CANNOT bow before the shrine
  Where once I knelt with thee;
My thoughts take other paths than thine,
  And thou art lost for me.
Yet still that youthful face appears
Unchanged across the changing years.

In vain our bark to distant lands
  Flies fast before the wind:
Our hearts are bound by living bands
  To what we leave behind;
And hands still beckon from the shore
Which we have left to touch no more.

DEFLECTING INFLUENCES

THOUGHT has its tastes and instincts—secret lures
That guide our reasonings in their destined course;
The power of will both brightens and obscures,
And shapes our judgments from their very source.

Old habits, interests, childhood's sacred spell,
A hundred impulses in turn prevail;
We seek for truth, but, though we reason well,
False weights are seldom absent from the scale.

For mind must act through character: in vain
Truth claims her empire o'er the lives of men.
The light streams there, but through a tinted pane;
And Reason writes, but Passion guides her pen.

THE LAST PARTING

FAREWELL, farewell! the dream is o'er,
  Its passion and its pain;
And Hope and Fear are now no more,
  Though Love and Grief remain.

One feeble pressure of the hand,
  One little sigh and shiver,
And all we thought and hoped and planned
  Has past away for ever.

Still on those pale and shrunken lips
  A feeble sunlight plays—
The radiance of a sun that dips
  Beneath the Western haze.

The sun that sinks will rise again,
  And brighter days may shine;
But thou hast vanished from our ken:
  Have we, too, past from thine?

Can any sound of distant strife,
  Or voice of pleading love,
Or any care of mortal life,
  Still follow thee above?

Or canst thou even now inspire
  Some thought that thrills the brain,
And raise the drooping spirit higher
  With Hope that conquers Pain?

We cannot tell. That vacant eye,
  Those lips, respond no more;
No echo answers to our cry,
  No light reveals the shore.

And be it gain, or be it loss,
  No eye can follow thee:
A lonely bark to-night must cross
  A dark and silent sea.

CHARACTER

I

CREEDS, custom, prejudice, surrounding types,
The ebb and flow of ceaseless influence—
These shape the thoughts and fashion of our lives
And make us what we are. Yet far below
There lurks a spring of hidden tendency—
The innate character that strives to reach
In thought and life to some congenial form
We know not yet—perchance may never know.
Thus blindly groping in a vague unrest,
Uncertain, broken, and deflected lives,
We feel the force beneath. With some it sinks,
Crushed by the weight of adverse circumstance;
With others bursts in greatness or in guilt,
Fierce as the lava through the fissured rocks,
Defying all restraint. But happier they
To whom betimes the kindly chance of life,
Some casual word or circumstance, reveals
The prophecy within. His path is smooth
Who early knows himself. So thoughts have stirred

Dim and half-formed in countless restless minds,
Till some great thinker rose, who with a touch
Drew them to light and made their meaning plain.

II

Well told the bard—the foremost of our age—
How sometimes in a dead man's rigid face
Some old ancestral type, unseen in life,
Appears again, and through the lately dead
The older dead look down.[1] So underneath
The play and shimmer of our daily lives—
Their transient shapes and colours—there are lines
Drawn by a vanished hand. Transmitted forms
Of strength or weakness, passion, tendency,
Made by another's life, bequeathed and stored,
Live in the race. Though each succeeding will
Subdues, adds, deepens, still the pattern-lines
Are never all effaced. Our acts are seeds
Which grow prolific in the hearts and minds
Of men who follow, and the clue that threads

[1] 'I went at once to the Palace and I saw the Prince. It is very unreal now, but the likeness to William the Silent is quite marvellous. Mr. H. was so struck with it that, if there had not been great difficulties, he would have wished to have a photograph taken even now. Those taken immediately after death are extremely good and like what we knew the Prince; but now the face has a kind of fixed, stern, elderly look—exactly like our head of William the Silent.'—*Extract from a letter from the Hague, July* 1884, *written a few days after the death of Alexander, the last Prince of Orange.*

The maze of character is chiefly hid
In distant, grass-grown, and neglected graves—
Forgotten actions of forgotten men.

III

Men move on divers planes, and divers laws
Govern their type and make their passions flow;
For some men seem all fashioned from without,
And shifting forms of circumstance and chance
Give texture to their thoughts. Pellucid lakes,
They smile or darken with the changing sky
And catch each passing hue. With some, life's spring
Is fixed within, and one o'ermastering thought
Will cling and haunt, and govern all their ways,
And make or mar a life; or through the glass
Of morbid nature which distorts and dims
They view the world around. And there are those
Who live through fancy such ideal lives,
And people earth with such etherial hues,
That common life seems tapestried with dreams.

THE PORTRAIT

WITH swift, bold strokes the portrait grows—
  Most swiftly at its birth ;
And soon the outlined forms disclose
  Its meaning and its worth.

For chiefly in his first designs
  The artist's skill is shown ;
Though blending hues and finer lines
  Add beauty, force, and tone.

So youth with rapid pencil draws
  A life, for good or ill,
And forms its habits and its laws,
  The bias of its will.

With changing tints the canvas glows—
  Life's fervours soon are past ;
But lines most lightly drawn are those
  Which often longest last.

We cannot turn the blotted page
Or cleanse the tainted source:
Youth sows the seed; we reap in Age
Its honour or remorse.

UNDEVELOPED LIVES

NOT every thought can find its words,
Not all within is known;
For minds and hearts have many chords
That never yield their tone.

Tastes, instincts, feelings, passions, powers,
Sleep there unfelt, unseen;
And other lives lie hid in ours—
The lives that might have been—

Affections whose transforming force
Could mould the heart anew;
Strong motives that might change the course
Of all we think and do.

Upon the tall cliff's cloud-wrapt verge
The lonely shepherd stands,
And hears the thundering ocean surge
That sweeps the far-off strands;

And thinks in peace of raging storms
  Where he will never be—
Of life in all its unknown forms
  In lands beyond the sea.

So in our dream some glimpse appears,
  Though soon it fades again,
How other lands or times or spheres
  Might make us other men;

How half our being lies in trance,
  Nor joy nor sorrow brings,
Unless the hand of circumstance
  Can touch the latent strings.

We know not fully what we are,
  Still less what we might be:
But hear faint voices from the far
  Dim lands beyond the sea.

OLD AGE

NOW the solemn shadows lengthen,
Life's long day is well-nigh done,
Impulse fails and habits strengthen,
Pleasures vanish one by one.
Feebly o'er the dark'ning dial,
Parting rays their image fling ;
Times of triumph, times of trial,
Lose their rapture, lose their sting.

How much now appears unreal
In the past that stirred us so :
Pinings for the high ideal,
Passion dreams, ambition's glow ;
All life's aims grow dimmer, fainter,
With a languid, calm decay,
Fading as the mighty Painter
Shades the scene with twilight grey.

Fancy dies. Illusions follow.
Love lasts best, but not its bloom ;
And the gayest laugh sounds hollow,
Echoed from an op'ning tomb.

Soon the past holds all our treasure,
All that childless age loves best.
Young men still may live for pleasure :
Old men only ask for rest.

'HE FOUND HIS WORK, BUT COULD NOT FIND'

HE found his work, but far behind
Lay something that he could not find:
Deep springs of passion that can make
A life sublime for others' sake,
And lend to work the living glow
That saints and bards and heroes know.
The power lay there—unfolded power—
A bud that never bloomed a flower;
For half beliefs and jaded moods
Of worldlings, critics, cynics, prudes,
Lay round his path and dimmed and chilled.
Illusions past. High hopes were killed;
But Duty lived. He sought not far
The 'might be' in the things that are;
His ear caught no celestial strain;
He dreamed of no millennial reign.
Brave, true, unhoping, calm, austere,
He laboured in a narrow sphere,
And found in work his spirit needs—
The last, if not the best, of creeds.

FAME, LOVE, AND YOUTH

LOOK down, look down from your glittering heights
And tell us, ye sons of glory,
The joys and the pangs of your eagle flights,
The triumph that crowned the story—

The rapture that thrilled when the goal was won
The goal of a life's desire;
And a voice replied from the setting sun—
Nay, the dearest and best lies nigher.

How oft in such hours our fond thoughts stray
To the dream of two idle lovers;
To the young wife's kiss; to the child at play,
Or the grave which the long grass covers;

And little we'd reck of power and gold,
And of all life's vain endeavour,
If the heart could glow as it glowed of old,
And if youth could abide for ever.

THE DECLINE OF LOVE

OH, broken-hearted lover,
  Who touched us long ago,
The days seem well-nigh over
  When tears like yours can flow.

Great poets still rise, bringing
  Thoughts subtle, deep, and strong;
But scarcely one is singing
  A simple lover's song.

A graver age uncloses,
  Which mocks at Cupid's barb,
And Venus hides her roses
  In Academic garb.

Ambition, science, learning,
  And countless efforts move,
And many lamps are burning,
  But very few to Love.

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Thought strengthens more than feeling,
And each takes wider range ;
And most wounds find their healing
In lives of ceaseless change.

And to the young man's vision
New star-like spheres unfold,
Which promise fields Elysian,
Quite other than of old.

And so the world advances,
And none can bid it stay ;
Yet still the heart romances,
Although the head be grey.

And in stray dreams of passion
The old days sometimes rise,
When Love was still the fashion,
Before the world grew wise.

UNCONSCIOUS CEREBRATION

SAY not that the past is dead.
Though the Autumn leaves are shed,
Though the day's last flush has flown,
Though the lute has lost its tone—
Still within, unfelt, unseen,
Lives the life that once has been;
With a silent power still
Guiding heart or brain or will,
Lending bias, force, and hue
To the things we think and do.
Strange! how aimless looks or words
Sometimes wake forgotten chords,
Bidding dreams and memories leap
From a long unbroken sleep.

THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

WHEN the world of pleasure palls,
When a voice within thee calls
To a larger, fuller life,
Nobler aims, more worthy strife,
Here, in such a pensive mood,
Half-aspiring, half-subdued,
Come with me and learn to trace
All the glories of thy race—
All that art and fame can give—
Making bygone greatness live.

These are those who governed men
By the sword or voice or pen—
Who through good and evil fate
Shaped the fortunes of the state;
Framed its creeds and laws, or bore
Its flag to many an unknown shore;
Fought many a fight on sea and land,
Or moulded realms by wise command,
Where beneath the Indian sky
For some strong guide the nations cry,
In lands where deeds, not words, have sway,
Where men can rule and men obey.

Here, as on the fabled heights
Where Apollo rains delights,
Poets seem to live again
Free from envy, strife, and pain.
Some whose verse can still inspire
Hearts with true celestial fire,
Give new worth to common things,
Lend the jaded spirit wings—
Clarion voice or polar star,
Wak'ning, guiding, from afar.
Others, once of equal fame,
Vanished almost to a name,
Poets of some fleeting fashion,
Transient taste or thought or passion—
Though their numbers sweetly flow,
Time has robbed them of their glow—
Left them faded, shrunk, and dwindled,
Like the hearts they once enkindled;
Yet perhaps some thought or line
Lives perennially divine.

Here are spirits tempest-born,
Cradled in neglect or scorn—
Men who kindled flames which long
Smould'ring burnt, then fierce and strong
In a wild consuming blaze.
Others rose in evil days,
Bidding erring nations come
To God's judgment-seat; while some
Scattered seedling thoughts that flew
Farther than their authors knew—
Thoughts that loose or thoughts that bind,
Guiding those who guide mankind.

These are few; but all around,
Gorgeous, jewelled, robed, or crowned,
Fortune's favourites in each age,
From the throne or court or stage,
From each scene of pompous show,
Make the spacious canvas glow.
Lawyer's craft and churchman's pride
Here are reigning side by side;
Learning, that has had its day,
Schemes and faiths long past away,
Here recorded live; and here
Many broken lives appear.
Some which fair as morning rose,
Darkened by a tragic close,
Drawn aside by idle dreams,
Bright by fitful, transient gleams,
Heroes of unworthy creeds,
Baffled hopes, misguided deeds,
Follies of a frenzied hour,
Vanquished causes, vanished power—
Each has left some trace at last
In these temples of the past.

Many climbed to these abodes,
Treading dark and evil roads:
Gambling with the lives of men,
Selling vote or voice or pen,
By the supple courtier's guile,
Or through some frail beauty's smile:
They, too, had their sparkling hour,
Pride of wealth, of place, of power—
A little space of fame or strife
In the nation's crowded life.

Now the veil of twilight falls
Softly on the pictured walls,
Making all the tints alike—
Holbein, Reynolds, and Vandyke:
Strong, stern, thoughtful, Tudor faces;
Stuarts, with all their courtly graces;
Lovely maidens, warriors bold,
Wise and foolish, young and old—
Lose their force or grace or bloom,
Fading in the gath'ring gloom,
Till their outlined figures seem
Like an unsubstantial dream.

Who can tell how here below
Twine the threads of weal and woe?
Knowledge, power, wealth and fame,
Sordid hope and lofty aim,
Man may lose or man may win;
Joy and sorrow lie within.
Theirs is oft the happiest lot,
All unseen or all forgot:
Some by furious tempests tost,
Fame and friends and riches lost,
Still, through failure, grief, or strife,
Know the worth and charm of life.
Others win by years of pain
Lifelong aims, and find them vain;
While of those most richly dowered,
Placed where fortune's gifts are showered,
On the proudest summits born,
Some stand listless and forlorn,
Stricken by that strange disease
When life's pleasures cease to please,

And, with all that earth can give,
Find it weariness to live.

Still the world seems mounting higher,
Chasing unfulfilled desire,
Spurning barrier, prop, and chain,
Scatt'ring darkness, conqu'ring pain,
Winning much—but in each prize
Some sad germ of evil lies ;
For the subtle taint that blends
With all human hopes and ends,
Making good the seed of ill,
Rules the course of nations still.
Progress comes, but she will wake
Cravings more than she can slake ;
Wealth increasing, soon will grow
Idle, joyless, tasteless show ;
Freedom's dawn proves weak and vain
When the rhetoricians reign,
When the path to honour lies
With the many, not the wise ;
Knowledge lends new power still
To the thought, but not the will,
And she scarce can cast a ray
On the future's clouded way ;
While old Time in triumph leads
Shattered causes, hopes, and creeds.

Spottiswoode & Co. Printers, New-street Square, London

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Digitized with financial assistance from
Ms.Vaidehi Thakar
on 06 November, 2019